

Washington, DC - Today, Congressman Dan Lungren (R-CA) expressed his concerns with the Senate healthcare bill in regards to its failures to fully protect our TRICARE users and veterans, their widows/widowers and dependents. Congressman Lungren released the following statement:

*"We have an obligation to keep our promises to our veterans, their families and those currently serving in uniform. The idea that those under TRICARE may be fined or forced to purchase additional healthcare plans for not meeting the 'minimum essential mandates' as outlined in the Senate bill is ludicrous.*

*"We also need to ensure that the management of TRICARE and the Department of Veteran's Affairs health care system stays within the Department of Defense and Department of Veteran's Affairs. It is unacceptable that bureaucrats at the Department of Health and Human Services could be making decisions about the services provided to our military and veterans. We need protect the quality of care and infringement of more government regulations on those who have served and given everything for our country."*

The Senate language does not appear to give the Department of Veterans' Affairs (VA) health care system specific protection from interference by other government agencies administering the various authorities contained in the massive bill, as it pertains to "minimum essential coverage."

The minimum essential coverage language in the Senate bill does cover "the veterans health care program under chapter 17 of title 38, United States Code," but it is unclear whether that covers veterans' survivors and dependents.

The final bill would leave it up to a bureaucrat at the Department of the Treasury to determine whether TRICARE meets the minimum standards under the Democrats' individual health insurance mandate. If that bureaucrat decides against TRICARE, service members and their families would have to *buy some other health coverage or pay a penalty*.

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Congressman Dan Lungren serves as Ranking Member on the House Administration Committee in addition to serving on the Judiciary and Homeland Security Committees